

Lesson 5, Day 1: Vocabulary

One of the words in this week's story that will help you understand this time period better is **knight**.

A knight was a heavily armed soldier during the Middle Ages dressed in armor who rode on horseback. They were highly skilled and highly honored.

Below are pictures of some knights in their armor.



Lesson 5, Day 2: To Read

The Boy Heroes of Crecy and Poitiers

You may have heard of the famous battles of Crecy and Poitiers, which were so much alike that they are often coupled together,—one always reminding us of the other. Yet there is one point they had in common which has not been especially remarked, but which ought to link them together in memory.

These two battles took place ten years apart; one was fought in 1346 and the other in 1356. The battlefields also were wide apart; for Crecy was far in the north of France, near the coast of the English Channel, and Poitiers in the south, nearly three hundred miles from Crecy. But they have drawn near to each other in the mind of students of history, because in both cases the French largely outnumbered the English; in both cases the English had gone so far into the country that their retreat seemed to be cut off; in both cases there was a most unexpected result, for the French were terribly defeated. In both cases this was because they made the same mistake — they trusted so much in their overwhelming numbers and their courage that they forgot to be careful, while the English made up for their small numbers by discipline and skill, without which courage is often of no avail.

It is exciting to read the description of these battles, with their archery fights, the clashing together of furious knights, the first brave advance and the final running away; but, after a while, the battles seem to fade in the greater interest which surrounds the figures of two youngsters,—one hardly more than fifteen, the other scarcely fourteen,—for one carried off all the honors of the victory of Crecy, and the other redeemed from total dishonor the defeat of Poitiers. Let us now learn the story of the English boy in the former battle, and of the French boy in the latter.

When, in 1346, Edward III of England had determined upon an invasion of France, he brought over his army in a fleet of nearly a thousand sail. He had with him not only the larger portion of his great nobles, but also his eldest son, Edward Plantagenet, the Prince of Wales. He had good reasons for taking the boy. The prince was expected to become the next King of England. His father thought him able to take a very important part in becoming also the King of France. He was a remarkable youth; strong and courageous, and wonderfully discreet for his years.

The ambition of every high-born young fellow in those days was to become a knight. Knighthood was something that both king and nobles regarded as higher in some respects than even the royalty or nobility to which they were born. No one could be admitted into an order of the great brotherhood of knights, which

extended all over Europe and formed an independent society, unless he had gone through severe discipline, and had performed some distinguished deed of valor. Then he could wear the golden spurs; for knighthood had its earliest origin in the distinction of fighting on horseback, while ordinary soldiers fought on foot. Although knighthood changed afterward, the word "chivalry" always expressed it, from *cheval*, a horse. And in addition to valor, which was the result of physical strength and courage, the knight was expected to be generous, courteous, faithful, devout, truthful, and high-principled.

As soon as King Edward landed at La Hague, he gave clear evidence of the serious work he had cut out for his son, and of his confidence that the youngster would be equal to it. He publicly pledged his boy to some great deed, and to a life of valor and honor. In sight of the whole army, he went through the form of making him a knight. Young Edward, clad in armor, knelt down before him on the sand, when the king touched his shoulder with his sword, saying: "I dub thee knight. Be brave, bold, and loyal!" You may imagine how proudly the young fellow seized lance and sword and shield, and sprang into his saddle, and with what high resolve he rode on beside his father to deserve the name which that ceremony had given him.

The army moved rapidly northward toward Calais, conquering everything on its way, till when in the neighborhood of Crecy, the intelligence came that the French king, Philip, with an army of one hundred and twenty thousand men and all the chivalry of France, had come in between it and the sea. There was no retreat possible. Edward had but thirty thousand to oppose this great host. They were four to one. He was in a dangerous spot; but after a time he succeeded in getting away to a good position, and there he awaited the onset. After arranging his troops in battle order, three battalions deep, he sent young Edward to the very front of the group of his finest barons to take the brunt of the terrible charge that was now to come! It shows of what stern material the king and the men of that time were made, for all his present love, all his future hope, lay around that boy. But he knew that the value of the glory which might be earned was worth the risk. That pledge to knighthood on the seashore had not been either lightly taken or lightly given. If chivalry was not equal to sacrifice, it was equal to nothing. The king could now count all the more on the enthusiasm and self-devotion of the knights and men-at-arms, in whose keeping he had placed so precious a charge. That whole first battalion would be nerved to tenfold effort because the prince was among them, for every one would be as deeply concerned as the father in the boy's success.

Edward carried his feeling of devotion to his son's best interests to such a chivalrous extent that he made it a point of duty to keep out of the battle altogether.

He went into a windmill on a hill nearby, and watched the fight through one of the windows in its upper story. He would not even put on his helmet. That was the way the father stood by his son—by showing absolute confidence in him, and denying himself all the glory that might come from an important battle. And the young boy was strengthened by knowing that his father fully trusted in him.

The first line of the French chivalry charged with fury, among them John, King of Bohemia, who with his knights was not behind in the onset; and yet this king was old and blind! His was chivalry in another form! He would have his part in the battle, and he plunged into it with his horse tied by its reins to one of his knights on either side. A plume of three ostrich feathers waved from his helmet. After the battle, he and his two companions were found dead, with their horses tied together.

But although the French were brave, they were not wise. For not only had they brought on the fight before they were prepared, but they had allowed Edward to place himself so that the afternoon sun, then near its setting, blazed full in their eyes. Edward's army fought in the shadow. The English bowmen sent their deadly arrows so thick into the crowded ranks of fifteen thousand Genoese archers and the intermingled men-at-arms, that the arrows filled the air like snow. The Genoese were thrown into confusion, and this spread throughout the whole French army. The French king, with some of his dukes, flew over the field in the rear, trying in vain to get up in time to swell the onset upon the English front.

The knights around the young prince were frightened for his safety. One of them, Sir Thomas of Norwich, was sent to Edward to ask him to come to help the prince.

"Sir Thomas," said the king, "is my son dead or unhorsed or so wounded that he cannot help himself?"

"Not so, my lord, thank God; but he is fighting against great odds, and is like to have need of your help."

"Sir Thomas," replied the king, "return to them who sent you, and tell them not to send for me, so long as my son is alive, and tell them that I bid them let the lad win his spurs; for I wish, if God so desire, that the day should be his, and the honor thereof remain to him and to those to whom I have given him in charge."

And there he stayed in the windmill till the battle was over. Soon the cry of victory reached him as the French fled in the darkness, leaving their dead strewn upon the field. Now the young prince appeared covered with all the glory that his father had

coveted for him, bearing the ostrich plume which he had taken from the dead King of Bohemia. The boy rode up with his visor raised, bearing his trophy aloft, and when it was placed as a decoration above the crest of his helmet, he little thought that the triple tuft was to wave for more than five hundred years on England's front, for such it does, and that, next to the crown, there shall be no badge so proudly known as the three feathers which nod above the coronet of the Prince of Wales, worn still to this day, because Prince Edward, when still in his teens, won it at Crecy. We will leave him there, and go on ten years.

Philip, the French king, had passed away about six years before, and John had ascended the throne. He was always plunging himself into difficulties, and was often guilty of cruelty; and yet was of such a free, generous nature, and had so many of the virtues of chivalry in that day, that he was known as "John the Good." He was the extreme opposite of Edward III, who was still King of England.

Some time after the victory of Crecy, Calais had been taken, and both nations were glad to arrange a truce. Nine years of this had gone by, when Edward thought it necessary to make another attempt on France. Edward, his son, now twenty-five, came over alone, landing at Bordeaux. He was now known as "the Black Prince," because he had a fancy for having his armor painted as black as midnight, in order to give a greater brightness to his golden hair. Marshaling his little army of 12,000 men, he set out into the interior of France. When he reached the neighborhood of Poitiers, he was astounded by the news that King John was after him with a force of 60,000 men—five to one! Here was Crecy over again as to numbers, but there was one thing made it worse; for, as Edward III not long before had instituted the famous "Order of the Garter" which is even now one of the foremost orders of knighthood in Europe, so John had just instituted the "Order of the Star." He made five hundred knights of this new order, every one of whom had vowed that he would never retreat, and would sooner be slain than yield to an enemy.

The Black Prince thought it almost impossible to fight his way through such a determined host. So he offered to restore all he had just conquered and to make another truce, if he might pass by unharmed. But John would not consent.

On the morning of September 19, 1356, the battle began. John had with him all four of his sons, Charles, Louis, John and Philip; the eldest only nineteen, and the youngest fourteen. The three former were put under guardianship in different portions of the field; but why the monarch took the youngest boy with him into the very front and thickest of the fight, it is hard to guess, unless it was another imitation of Edward, and he had also good reason to think that the lad was

unusually well able to take care of himself, having been pledged to knighthood. But young "Sir Philip," as he was called, proved quite equal to the occasion.

King John himself led the way. Meanwhile, the Prince of Wales had planted his army just where he would tempt John into that trap and had set his archers in good position. These men were clad in green, like Robin Hood's men, and carried bows seven feet long and so thick that few men of modern days could bend them. A shaft from one of these would fly with tremendous force. Edward had placed these archers in ambush, behind green hedges, and crouching in the green vineyards.

Just as the French king dashed down the narrow valley—the white standard of France on one side of him, his little son on the other—and began to deploy the whole advance battalion, preliminary to a grand charge—whiz! whiz! whir! whir! from both sides came the arrows, as thick as hail, from the hidden archers. The astonished Frenchmen fell back. That crowded still more those who were yet wedged in the narrow space behind. Now came the English onset. Then a panic. Then flight. Dukes, barons, knights of all sorts fled with the rest; also Charles, Louis, John, the three elder sons of the king. The king was in great danger of being slain; but he did not move, and Philip stood fighting by his side. The standard-bearer fell, and the white ensign lay in the dust. Many a faithful knight was cut down, or swept away a prisoner. But Philip flinched not.

The assailants—some of whom knew the king, while others were wondering who he might be—pressed them fiercely on every side, striking at them, but more anxious to take them captives than to kill them, for they were worth a heavy ransom. The Englishmen shouted all together, "Yield, else you die!" Little Sir Philip had no yield in him, as long as his father held out. He kept close to him, trying to ward off the blows which were aimed at him, and warning him in time, as his quick eye caught a near danger on either hand. Every instant he was heard calling out, "Father, right! Father, left!" Suddenly a mounted knight appeared, who hailed the king in French. It was a French knight, who was fighting on the English side.

"Sir, sir!" he shouted, "I pray you yield!"

"To whom shall I yield me?" said John, "Where is my cousin, the Prince of Wales?"

"Sir, yield you to me; I will bring you to him."

"Who are you?" said the king.

"Denis de Morbecque, a knight of Artois; I serve the King of England, not being able to live in France, for I have lost all I possessed there."

"I yield me to you," said John, handing him his steel glove.

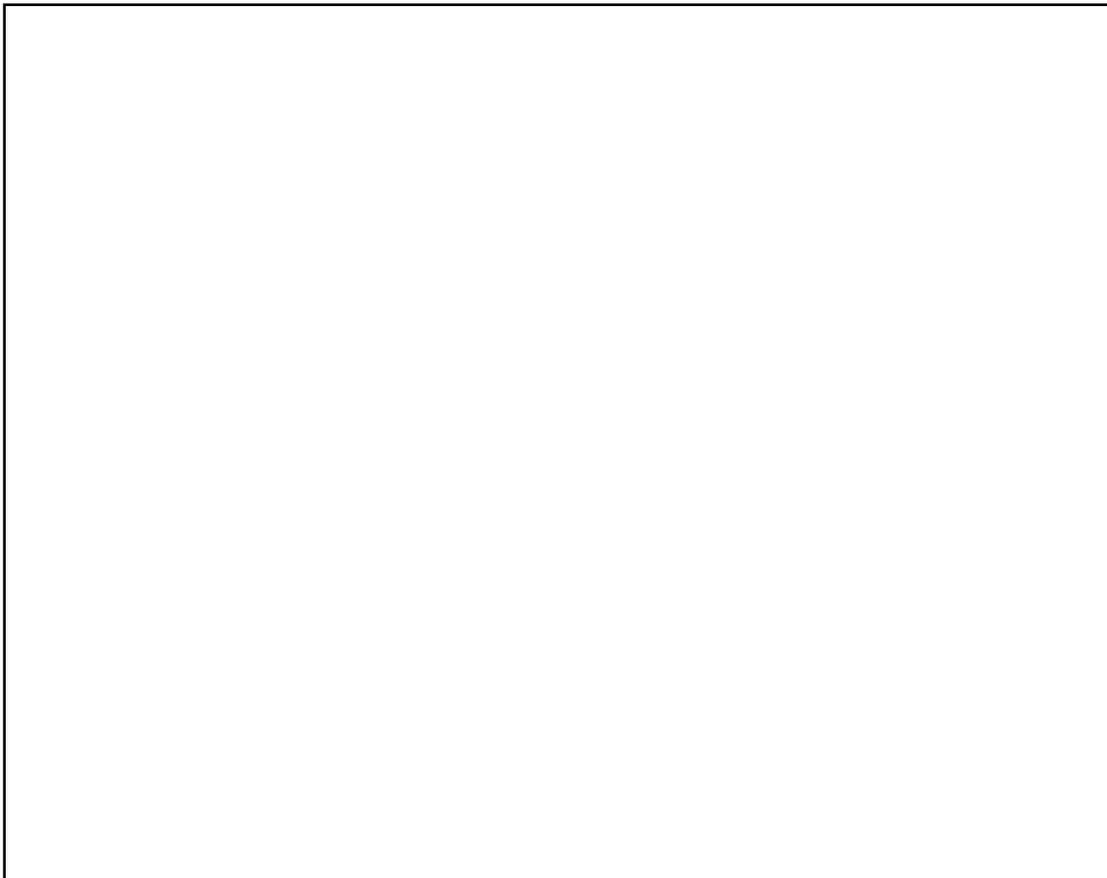
Then the whole crowd began to exclaim, "I took him!" Both the king and the prince were jostled, until two barons broke through the throng with their horses, and led the two to the tent of the Prince of Wales, "and made him a present of the King of France!" says an old writer. "The prince also bowed low before the king, and received him as a king, properly and discreetly, as he well knew how to do."

In the evening he entertained him and Philip at supper, "and would not sit at the king's table for all the king's entreaty, but waited as a serving man, bending the knee before him, and saying: 'Dear sir, be pleased not to put on so bad a countenance, because it hath not pleased God to consent this day to your wishes; for, assuredly, my lord and father will show you all the honor and friendship he shall be able, and he will come to terms with you so reasonably that you shall remain good friends forever.'"

This went on for years during all the captivity of King John and Prince Philip,—first at Bordeaux and afterward at the then new Windsor Castle, in England, where galas, tournaments, hawking and hunting, and all sorts of entertainments were devised for them. When King John was brought from Bordeaux to England, where King Edward had prepared to meet him in great state, the French king was mounted on a tall, cream-colored charger, and young Philip rode by his side in great honor also, while the Prince of Wales sat on a small black horse, like an humble attendant on them both. The two royal fathers met midway in that London street, the houses which lined the way were hung with rich tapestries, the trades were out in companies of many colors, the people thronged round the steel clad cavalcades as they came together, and they filled the air with shouts—but what two figures now most fill the eye when all that pageant has passed away? Not the father who stood by his son with such chivalrous faith, nor the father whose son stood by him with such chivalrous devotion, but the fair youth who carries that tuft of feathers upon his helmet, with its motto, "I serve," and the lad whom all have heard of as "Philip the Bold"; the boy-hero of Crecy doing chivalrous honor to the boy-hero of Poitiers!

Lesson 5, Day 3: To Draw

Copy the picture of an English crown and color it.



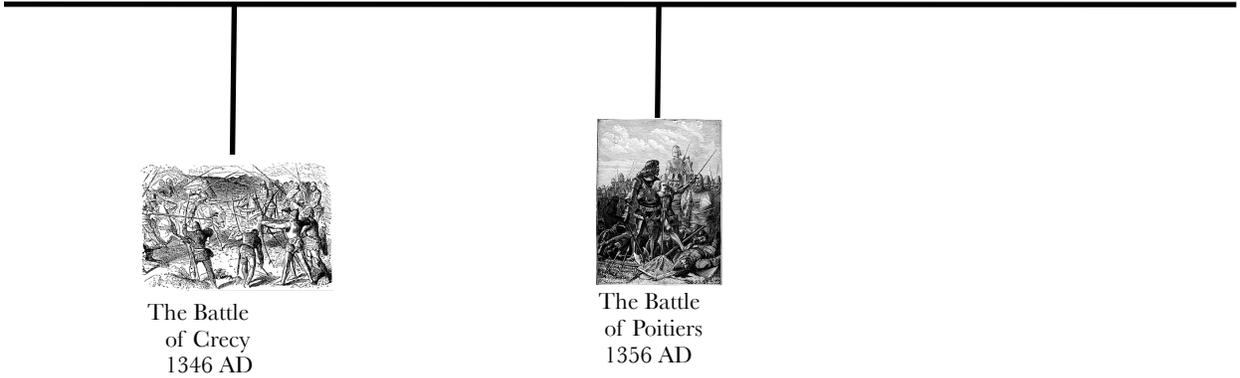
Lesson 5, Day 4: To Color

Color the picture of the knight on his horse.



Lesson 5, Day 5: Timeline of Events

Place the battles of Crecy and Poitiers in 1346 and 1356 AD on your timeline as shown below. These events will go on a new page at the end of your timeline as shown.



Here are the pictures to add to your timeline this week:

